

POST AND TELEGRAPHS.

POSTAL SERVICE.

THE first post-office was established by Governor Macquarie in First post-office. the year 1810, Mr. Isaac Nichols being appointed Postmaster. The office was in High-street (now known as George-street), at the residence of Mr. Nichols, who was, "in consideration of the trouble and expense attendant upon this duty," allowed to charge on delivery to parties addressed, 8d. for every English or foreign letter of whatever weight, and for every parcel weighing not more than 20 lb., 1s. 6d.; but exceeding that weight, 3s. The charge on Colonial letters was 4d., irrespective of weight; and soldiers' letters, or those addressed to their wives, were charged 1d. Very little improvement in regard to postal matters took place for some years. In 1825 an Act was passed by Sir Thomas First Postal Act. Brisbane, with the advice of the Council, "to regulate the postage of letters in New South Wales," giving power for the establishment of post-offices, and to fix the rates of postage.

It was, however, not until 1828 that the provisions of the Act were put into full force. The rates of postage appear to have Early postage rates. depended upon the distance and the difficulty of transmission. The lowest single inland rate was 3d., and the highest 12d., the postage on a letter increasing according to its weight, which was fixed for a single letter at $\frac{1}{4}$ -ounce. Letters between New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land were charged 3d. each (ship rate), and newspapers 1d. Other ship letters were charged 4d. single rate, and 6d. for any weight in excess. The privilege of franking Franking. was allowed to the Governor and a number of the chief public officials, and letters to and from convicts passed free under certain regulations.

Sir Richard
Bourke's Postal
Act.

In 1831 a two-penny post was established in Sydney, and in 1835, under Sir Richard Bourke, the Act of 1825 was repealed and another Act was passed, which fixed the charge on a single letter at 4d. for 15 miles, 5d. for 20 miles, 6d. for 30 miles, and so on up to 1s. for 300 miles. In 1837 a post-office was established in Melbourne, which was then of course a part of New South

Stamped covers.

Wales. Stamps were introduced in the same year in the shape of stamped covers or envelopes, which are believed to have been the first postage stamps ever issued.

First mail
steamer.

Regular steam mail communication with England was first established in 1852 ; prior to that time the Colony had to depend upon the irregular arrival and despatch of sailing vessels, but in that year the steamships "Australia," "Chusan," and "Great Britain" were despatched from England, making the voyage in 60 days, causing a strong desire in the minds of the Colonists for a more frequent and steady system of communication with the Old World. The outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854 hindered for a while the accomplishment of this object, but in 1856 a line of steamers was again laid on, and the service was carried on by the Peninsular and Oriental Company, and the Royal Mail Company for some years, without giving so much satisfaction to the public as might have been expected.

The Panama line.

As far back as 1854 a proposal was made for the establishment of a line of mail packets *via* Panama, and negotiations on the subject were carried on for several years between the Government of the United Kingdom and those of New South Wales and New Zealand. The result was that in 1866 the line was started, and continued in operation until the end of 1868, when it was terminated through the failure of the company by which it had been carried out. In the following year New South Wales, in conjunction with New Zealand, inaugurated a mail service *via* San Francisco, which, with a few interruptions and under various

San Francisco
route.

conditions, has been continued up to the present time. The contract expired in November, 1890, but the service is continued by the New Zealand Government, and the steamers still make Sydney their terminus.

The establishment of a mail route *via* America had the effect of stimulating the steamship owners who were engaged in the service *via* Suez, and from that time there was a marked improvement in the steamers employed, as well as in the punctuality and speed with which the mails were delivered. The Peninsular and Oriental Company have carried mails for the colonies almost from the inception of the ocean steam service until now, with very few interruptions. Towards the end of 1878 the Orient Company commenced carrying mails between Australia and the United Kingdom, and has continued to do so ever since. In the year 1883 the fine steamers of the Messageries Maritimes of France entered the service, to be followed in 1887, by the North German Lloyd's, so that there are now one or two mails received and despatched every week, and a voyage to Europe, which was formerly a formidable undertaking, involving great loss of time and much discomfort, is regarded as a mere pleasure trip to fill up a holiday.

Mail service *via* Suez.

French and German steamers.

The following table gives the number of letters and newspapers passing, in 1861, through the post offices of the various Colonies:—

Letters and papers carried.

Colony.	No. of Post Offices.	Letters.	Newspapers.
New South Wales	340	4,369,463	3,384,245
Victoria	369	6,109,929	4,277,179
Queensland	24	515,211	427,489
South Australia	160	1,540,472	1,089,424
Western Australia .....	...	193,317	137,476
Tasmania	100	835,873	895,656
New Zealand .....	...	1,236,768	1,428,351
Australasia .....	...	14,801,033	11,639,820

Postal business

The following shows the postal business of each of the colonies during 1889 :—

Colony.	Number of Post Offices.	Number of Letters and Post Cards received and despatched.	Number of Books, and Parcels, and Packages received and despatched.	Number of Newspapers received and despatched.	Amount of Revenue received during the year.	Amount of Expenditure during the year.
New South Wales....	1,261	53,071,300	7,869,400	36,530,800	£ 395,584	£ 393,606
Victoria	1,600	48,097,268	6,810,288	20,632,732	*370,000	.....
Queensland	834	13,070,083	1,914,495	10,937,330	133,469	209,404
South Australia	593	16,358,607	913,122	9,085,714	107,560	177,987
Western Australia	186	2,737,034	247,681	1,392,825	13,367	†33,702
Tasmania	293	4,814,239	651,706	5,424,657	39,536	44,283
New Zealand	1,189	22,075,696	2,690,746	8,360,508	197,311	154,101
Australasia.....	5,956	161,154,227	21,097,438	92,394,575	1,250,827	.....

* Approximate.

† Includes Telegraphs.

Carriage of letters, &c., per head.

The postal returns of New South Wales, as illustrated in the above table, largely exceed those of the other colonies, Victoria being next in order. In New South Wales, Queensland, and Tasmania newspapers are carried free, a fact which, no doubt, largely extends their circulation through the post. In all the other colonies a small fee is charged. The following table shows the number of letters and post-cards, books, &c., and newspapers per head during 1889. Western Australia and South Australia take the lead in regard to letters, but Tasmania and New South Wales stand foremost as regards newspapers. The returns for 1889 show the following results :—

Letters, &c., Books, &c., and Newspapers per head.

Colony.	Number per Inhabitant.		
	Letters, &c.	Books, Parcels, &c.	Newspapers.
New South Wales.....	49	7	33
Victoria	43	6	19
Queensland	33	5	27
South Australia	51	3	28
Western Australia.....	64	6	32
Tasmania	32	4	36
New Zealand	36	4	14
Australasia.....	43	5	25

The following table shows the number of letters and post-cards per head in some of the principal countries of the world. With the exception of the United Kingdom the extent of the correspondence in Australasia largely exceeds that of any of the countries named :—

Postal business in other countries.

Country.	Number of Letters and Post-cards per head of Population.
Canada	16·1
Cape Colony, White population	20·1
United Kingdom.....	49·3
France	15·1
Germany	21·4
Italy	6·6
Austro-Hungary	13·1
Netherlands	18·1
Belgium	16·1
Australasia	42·6

The following table illustrates the extent of the postal facilities in regard to the number of inhabitants, and the square miles of territory to each post-office. It will be seen that Western Australia has one office to every 235 persons, while New South Wales, with the largest postal business of the colonies, has the least number of offices compared with population; Western Australia, the least when compared with territory :—

Postal facilities in Australasia.

Colony.	Number of Inhabitants to each Post Office.	Number of Square Miles of Territory to each Office.
	Number.	Square Miles.
New South Wales	890	246
Victoria	699	54
Queensland	487	801
South Australia	547	1,523
Western Australia.....	235	5,698
Tasmania	517	89
New Zealand	522	87
Australasia	636	530

Ocean mail services.

All the colonies, with the exception of New Zealand, have, in conjunction with the Imperial Government, entered into an agreement with the Peninsular and Oriental, and the Orient Steam Navigation Companies. Under this contract the two Companies have undertaken a weekly mail service for a yearly subsidy of £170,000. This subsidy is made up by a contribution of £95,000 from the Imperial Government, and of £75,000 from the six contracting colonies, distributed on the basis of population as follows :—

Colony.	Amount of Subsidy, 1889.	
	£	s. d.
New South Wales	27,637	3 10
Victoria	27,568	0 0
Queensland (from 1 April).....	7,095	0 2
South Australia	7,973	4 5
Tasmania	3,658	7 1
Western Australia	1,068	4 6
Total	75,000	0 0

The estimated net cost to be made good from revenue in New South Wales was only £2,599 3s. 10d. A return of deficiency in postal revenue for the other Colonies is unfortunately not available. The mail service has been performed with great regularity and expedition. The average time of both services in 1889 was :—

Time of service via Suez.

	Days.
London to Sydney	35 $\frac{6}{24}$
Sydney to London	36 $\frac{14}{24}$

Mail service via San Francisco.

In addition to the federal ocean mail service *via* Suez, New South Wales and New Zealand, until November, 1890, subsidised the Union Steamship Company for a four-weekly service, *via* San Francisco, to the amount of £37,000, of which New South Wales paid £25,750, and New Zealand £11,250. The net cost to New South Wales in 1889 for this service was estimated at

£4,397, the balance being made good by postages. The average time during the same year by this route was :—

	Days.
London to Sydney	40 $\frac{2}{3}$
Sydney to London	40 $\frac{1}{3}$

Time by the American service.

The British India Steam Navigation Company, sailing from Brisbane, *via* Torres Straits, carry mails under contract with the Queensland Government. This route is slightly longer than those previously mentioned, letters occupying 46 days in transit.

Torres Straits Route.

Besides those mentioned the other steamship companies trading with the Australasian Colonies carry mails, notably the Messageries Maritimes Company and the North German Lloyd, sailing from Sydney, the British India Steam Navigation Company, sailing from Brisbane, *via* Torres Straits, and the Shaw, Saville, and Albion Company, sailing from Lyttelton, *via* Magellan Straits. The companies are paid by the Colonies in proportion to the weight of mail matter carried, but the Messageries Maritimes Company and the North German Lloyd are in receipt of large subsidies from the French and German Governments respectively. The postage to the United Kingdom was reduced in January, 1891, from 6d. per $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. *via* Italy, and 4d. *via* the long sea route, to the uniform rate of 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.; and the foreign postal returns for January, 1891, of all the Colonies affected show already a large increase in the mails carried over the corresponding month of 1890. It may be expected that the Postal Conference, which will assemble in Sydney in March, 1891, and the Conference of the Universal Postal Union, which is to assemble in Vienna a month or two later, where the Australasian Colonies will be for the first time represented, will result in a similar reduction of the postage to all foreign countries.

French and German mail steamers.

Postal Conferences.

TELEGRAPHS.

In no country in the world has the development of telegraphic communication been so rapid as in Australasia, and in none has it been taken advantage of by the public to anything like the

Telegraphic communication in Australasia.

Number of
messages sent.

same extent. Taking Australasia as a whole, there are only three countries in the world that possess a greater extent of telegraph lines, and only four in which a larger number of messages are actually sent. In no other country, however, does the number of messages bear anything approaching the same ratio to the population. The following table illustrates these remarks :—

Country.	Length of tele- graph lines (poles).	Messages.	Messages per head of popu- lation.
	Miles.	No.	No.
Canada*	2,440	5,032,866	0·99
Cape Colony (white population)...	4,339	1,063,949	2·67
United Kingdom	30,720	57,765,000	1·50
France	54,677	30,917,225	0·80
Germany	58,201	29,406,601	0·62
Italy	20,736	8,139,500	0·26
Austria-Hungary	27,846	10,989,000	0·28
Netherlands	3,094	4,060,000	0·90
Belgium	3,976	4,954,000	0·80
United States.....	178,719	80,000,000	1·21
Australasia	39,480	10,912,731	2·88

* Government lines only.

Number of mes-
sages per head.

The return for the United States includes only the lines of the Western Union Company, who own the principal part of the United States telegraph system. From the above table it appears that the population of Australasia sent nearly three messages through the telegraph in the year for each inhabitant. In the United Kingdom the number was about one and a-half to each inhabitant ; in the United States of America about one and a-quarter messages for every inhabitant ; in France and Germany one message and a-half, and one and a-quarter, respectively, for every two persons ; in Austria-Hungary, and Italy one message for every four persons. In Canada about one message is sent for every inhabitant in each year, and in Cape Colony about two and three-quarters.

First Telegraph
Lines.

The electric telegraph was introduced into these Colonies almost at the time of the earliest railway construction. The first telegraph

messages were sent in New South Wales in 1851. In Victoria the telegraph line from Melbourne to Williamstown was opened in 1854. The first line in South Australia, from Adelaide to Port Adelaide, was opened in 1856; and the first Tasmanian line was completed in 1857. In New Zealand the first telegraph office was opened in 1862; and the line from Brisbane to Rockhampton, the first in Queensland, was opened in 1864. Telegraphic communication was established between Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide in 1858. The first telegraph in Western Australia was opened in 1869, and communication between that Colony and all the others of the group was completed in 1877.

Australasia is connected with Europe and the rest of the world ^{Cables.} by means of cables connecting with the various Asiatic continental lines. There are two cables—the older one opened in July, 1872—joining Port Darwin to Banjowangie in Java, whence communication is provided with Europe by way of Batavia, Singapore, Madras, and Bombay. The length of line between Adelaide and London is 12,570 miles—9,146 cable, and 3,424 miles overland wire. Of the land portion 1,971 miles are between Adelaide and Port Darwin. A second cable was laid in 1888 from Frome, on Roebuck Bay, in Western Australia, connecting with South Australia on one side, and Banjowangie on the other. The cable joining Tasmania to the continent of Australia was laid in 1869, the length being about 170 miles. It starts from the township of Flinders, near Cape Schanck, in Victoria, and terminates at Low Head, at the mouth of the Tamar, in Tasmania. New Zealand was joined to the continent by a cable laid in 1876, the length being about 1,191 miles. It has its Australian terminus within sight of the spot where Captain Cook landed on the shores of Botany Bay, and within a stone's throw of the monument of La Perouse. The New Zealand terminus of the cable is at Nelson, on the middle or south island, whence another cable is laid to Wanganui, in the North island, with an alternate line from Picton to Wellington.

All the Colonies show very rapid progress in the period from 1871 to 1881. In the case of Queensland this increase is largely due to the construction of the line to the Gulf of Carpentaria; and in the case of South Australia, to the construction of the lines to Port Darwin and to Eucla, on the boundary of Western Australia.

Length of
Telegraph poles.

The following table shows the increase in the number of telegraphic lines for each colony at intervals of ten years, as far as the returns are available :—

Miles of Telegraph (Poles).

Colony.	1861.	1871.	1881.	1889.
New South Wales.....	1,616	*4,674	8,515	10,732
Victoria.....		*2,295	3,350	3,967
Queensland.....	169	2,525	6,280	9,456
South Australia.....	597	1,183	4,946	5,511
Western Australia.....		*750	1,585	2,961
Tasmania.....		*291	928	1,979
New Zealand.....		2,015	3,824	4,874
Australasia.....	.....	13,733	29,428	39,480

* In 1873.

Length of
Telegraph wires.

The next table gives similar particulars, only the amounts are expressed as miles of wire instead of length in poles :—

Miles of Telegraph (Wires).

Colony.	1861.	1871.	1881.	1889.
New South Wales.....	1,981	5,579	14,278	22,606
Victoria.....		3,472	6,626	13,554
Queensland.....	169	2,614	8,585	16,981
South Australia.....	915	1,718	7,228	11,677
Western Australia.....		*750	1,593	3,330
Tasmania.....		241	1,157	2,936
New Zealand.....		3,287	9,653	13,489
Australasia.....	.....	17,661	49,120	†84,573

* In 1873.

† Includes telephone wires.

The number of telegrams passing through the wires of each Colony, and the revenue received by the respective telegraph departments for the year 1889, were as follows :—

Business done by Telegraphs during the year 1889.

Colony.	Number of Telegrams.	Revenue Received.
New South Wales	3,433,562	£ 186,862
Victoria	2,885,919	127,720
Queensland	1,568,872	93,297
South Australia	984,180	100,558
Western Australia	197,587	10,036
Tasmania	280,559	26,414
New Zealand	1,802,987	106,463
Australasia	11,153,666	651,350